

Introduction

Iowa's landscape has changed dramatically in the last 150 years. It is perhaps the most ecologically altered state in the Nation. Once a state of tall grass prairies interspersed with millions of acres of wetlands and gently bisected by wooded streams, Iowa's rich soils were among the most fertile and productive on earth.

For the majority of Iowa landowners, the state's farmers, these resources must provide an income to sustain their family and rural lifestyle. Iowa farmers care deeply about soil conservation and wildlife. However, a multitude of economic, conservation and changing farm programs carry enormous weight in determining their land management decisions.

Currently, more than 98 percent of the state is privately owned. The vast majority of Iowa's land will remain in the hands of Iowa's private landowners. These landowners have a tremendous responsibility to care for the land and provide for its future.

As a property owner who is concerned about conservation, there is much you can do to protect and improve wildlife habitat and the environment. Working as individuals, or in concert with our neighbors, conservation organizations and government agencies, we can become better stewards.

This guide presents landowners with several ways they can improve wildlife habitat on their property. It is meant to stimulate thought and encourage action. It includes tried and proven methods which will benefit many species of wildlife. It is intended as a general guide, to help increase interest and hopefully generate landowner contact with resource professionals throughout Iowa.

Regardless of the size of your property or the wildlife species you are most interested in, you can set goals and take proper steps to improve your property for its wildlife resources. Every piece of property is important in the "Big Picture", and it's not too late to begin improving your land. This guide provides information you will need to conserve and improve Iowa's plants, animals and ecosystems.



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Photo by USDA-NRCS.

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